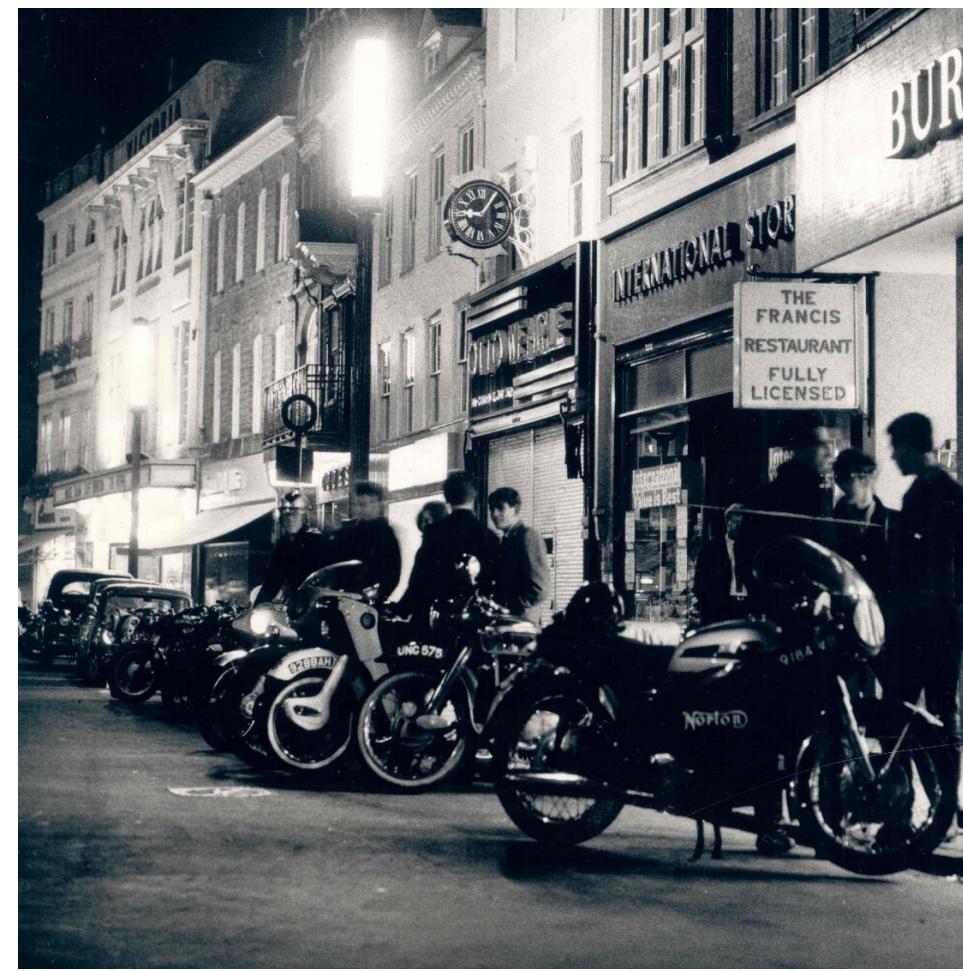


Cambridgeshire Clocks Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty



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Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the
Cambridgeshire Weekly News, its sister title.

They are supplemented by some articles published in the
Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

Most were featured in my ‘Looking Back’ column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014

The complete ‘Cambridgeshire Scrapbook’ of which this is a small section is published online at
bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in
touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library
where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the
1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2017

1898 11 09

St Matthew's church clock, p3

1899 02 11

Sir – In order to affix the new clock St Matthews's church bells have been floored. A very strong protest should be made against the bells being again re-hung, for of all the abominable, discordant clanging, nothing can be compared to them for wretched sound. Instead of drawing people to church, they are calculated to drive people away from them as fast as possible. The effect on the nerves of the poor inhabitants is dreadful. They should be condemned as a most intolerable nuisance to a large section of the people in this thickly populated district – “Cantab”

1899 04 01

At midnight the new clock which has been erected at St Matthews Church, Cambridge, will chime for the first time. Until recently the bells of the church hung outside the building, but now a turret has been erected at the West End and here the clock has been placed. It is “Ting Tang” quarter clock erected as a memorial to the vicar's late wife.

1902 03 25

Sir – with regard to the Clock Tower Permanent Memorial which it is proposed to erect at the Hills Road end of Station Road, Cambridge. I cannot see the need of such a clock there as I am quite sure anyone can see the clock at Hyde Park Corner from Station Road. Would it not be more beneficial if it was placed in the centre of Parker's Piece? It would not only serve the cricketers and footballers but would be of great boon to the working man as he passes two and fro – F. Miller

1902 04 11

Sir – Cambridge council propose to erect a clock tower at the end of Station Road as a permanent memorial of the coronation. There are other places more suitable. The Four Lamps on Newmarket Road would be better and a great convenience to Barnwell and Chesterton. But why not erect a statue to our departed Queen, Victoria? This could be done by the removal of the present dirty drinking fountain and replaced by one more useful with the statue to her memory – Charles Hoppett

1902 07 30

Cottenham, it would appear, has no desire to spend money upon such a necessary of life as water but is prepared to sanction money for the purpose of providing an illuminated clock tower to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty the King. It is pleasant to see so much loyalty and patriotism, but it would be even pleasanter to see a much greater regard for the elementary principles of sanitation. The village has for the past 18 years wrangled over the water supply question until a second serious outbreak of typhoid. The matter is, of course, one for Cottenham people but we could have hoped they would regard pure water as of even greater importance than illuminated clocks

1902 07 31

Cottenham clock tower comment, p2 *

1905 12 01

Whittlesford church tower has been restored from a very dilapidated condition through the generosity of an anonymous benefactor. The work which has included the restoration of the masonry, the addition of a bell and the re-casting of three others and the introduction of a new ringing frame and a clock has cost about £1,600. The restored tower was consecrated by the Bishop of Ely who said much remained to be done but the work had begun well. 05 12 01b

1907 06 22

The chimes of St Giles church clock in Cambridge have been restored after a silence of six years. Notice was given in the Parish Magazine but all do not read that excellent periodical and there was

much astonishment when the bells entered anew upon their purpose of telling out the hours. The tone of the large bell is much improved now it has been re-hung so that it no longer rests against the wall.
07 06 22c

1908 07 31

Cottenham's new church clock has been placed in position on the tower about ten feet higher than the former one. The work of Messrs Smith and Sons of Derby, it has two dials and brass hands. The quarter chimes are sweet in tone. The previous clock was thought to be more than 200 years old and had long since failed as a time keeper. CWN 08 07 31

1908 12 11

It is many decades since the south face of the church clock at Histon was painted or even washed. Some say the dial has not been washed since the flood of 1879 but others think it has been gilded more recently. But at present the figures are practically erased whereas they used to be discernible from Park Lane. Some face paints easily wash off but hopefully the next renovator will use a better paint and gilt. CWN 08 12 11

1909 10 08

The smaller of two weights of the clock in the tower of Swavesey church fell with a crash on Sunday when the wire broke. There was nobody in the church at the time but Mr J. Bridgford, who was in the yard of the Manor opposite, heard the crash. It was repaired by Mr E. Trench Smith, clockmaker of Huntingdon, and set going again to the satisfaction of the dwellers in Church End and of persons hurrying to catch trains. CWN 09 10 08

1910 06 03

Willingham church tower is not haunted, although some people thought it was the other night. They heard some mysterious noises as though chains were being dragged along. They stood and wondered and shivered with fear. The noises ceased; then came a sound as of a door opening and closing, and the frightened group prepared to run away. Whilst they were hesitating the sexton came towards them and told them he had been winding the clock 10 06 03h

1920 12 02

The work of re-hanging the Over church bells has been in progress during the past month. Because of the work the chimes were stopped, there was no striking of the clock and the bells were not used for Sunday service. These things were much missed by the parishioners as no one seemed to know the time. The re-opening was marked by a public tea in the schools when nearly 200 of the parish were present and a peal of 720 changes was rung. 10 12 02j

1911 01 27

The famous old bells in the chapel tower of Trinity College have been re-cast and lowered in tone by Messrs Taylor of Loughborough. They had not previously been taken down since their erection. The largest one bears the date 1610 and was made by Richard Holdeld, another is the work of Thomas Osborn of Downham and was put in the tower in 1795 while the third dates back to 1726. They have not been striking properly for some time past. The late Lord Grimthorpe left money for the provision of a new clock which was obtained in September. 11 01 27

1913 05 16

Police were called to F. Gunter's jeweller's shop in Burleigh Street when a clock was spotted resting on the guttering. The attic window was open and display cases disarranged. Rumours spread that it had been burgled and a crowd assembled, grateful for anything that promised relief from the tedium of Whit Monday. Finding the back door locked, police borrowed a ladder and entered through the attic window. Inside they found a servant girl who explained that she'd dropped the clock out of the window. Returning from an excursion, Mr Gunter and his family were surprised at the commotion

1913 12 26

Lighting church clocks *

1914 02 02

Hundon parish church was gutted by fire on Sunday evening and nothing now remains but the walls and the tower. The building had been closed after evensong that afternoon but just before eight Mr Jolley noticed a glare near the organ. Being unable to enter he hurried for assistance but within fifteen minutes the church was ablaze from end to end. Soon there was a great crash of falling masonry as the roof collapsed. As the fire reached the woodwork in the belfry the bells fell to the ground with resounding crashes and now lie in an indescribable heap. A new organ and clock were destroyed but fortunately the parish registers and the pulpit were saved. 14 02 20f

1914 06 19

When the caretaker opened Linton church he found two planks in the belfry tower had been torn from the roof above, several chairs were broken and a large lump of lead lay on the floor. He suspected a visit from the suffragettes as other outrages have been frequent. It was found that the piece of lead was not a bomb but one of the clock weights which hung high in the tower. It had crashed through the belfry floor, chipped an oak beam and caused the disorder. The clock was still going. 14 06 19 p4

1916 10 25

Juvenile Parish Clerk and Postman. The 11-year-old son of Mr. Alfred Arber, of Bottisham (one of the village postmen for 24 years and church clerk) is, as far as possible, carrying on the duties of his father, who has joined the Colours. The boy rings the bells at 9 o'clock on Sundays, and starts the chiming of the bells for Divine Service. He also looks after the church clock, and most of the work which was carried on by his father. Possibly he is the youngest church clerk on record. The mother also takes her husband's place in minding the children, in church.

1919 12 10

Histon Church Clock.—"Parishioner" writes: "May I be allowed to call attention to the old church clock? Residents, chiefly those living and working at the Church End, do miss and more than miss the old clock striking out the hour which has always been a great boon and convenience. The clock and, if necessary, the wherewithal would be raised in less than a trice. If the churchwardens or responsible authorities could remedy this small matter it could doubtless be put in order, many would be grateful

1939 02 01

The Jubilee Clock at Newmarket, a well-known landmark to all road users, has stopped and refuses to start again. The guttering round the tower had split allowing water to get through the roof and rusting some of the pinions. Scaffolding will have to be erected and they hoped to put something over the top of the clock to prevent further damage. But the council does not have enough scaffolding and they may have to call in one of the large builders. Major Griffiths said that when he heard the clock has stopped he hoped the tower had fallen down, but was disappointed. 39 02 01b

1939 02 02

Swavesey clock stopped, needs overhaul – 39 02 02a

1940 03 30

Clocks at Gt St Mary & Trinity College renovated by E.T. Cottingham – memories – 40 03 30a

1940 08 03

Complaints over chiming Our Lady clock – 40 08 03

1944 01 28

Village Timekeeper. — At the time of going to press, we are informed that the list of subscribers for the upkeep of the church tower at Melbourn has been placed in the window of the post office for all to see. Some villagers complained about the clock being deliberately stopped in order to call attention to the need of money, but the plan appears to have been effective, as the subscription list is larger than some expected it to be. There is, however, ample space for many more names, and more money is

required. It is to be hoped however that a more satisfactory and agreeable method of obtaining the annual amount called for will be formulated and adopted.

1955 12 13

The clock that changed places – St Giles' church – 55 12 13a

1956 02 25

Guilden Morden clock and rood screen – 56 02 25b

1956 03 16

Swaffham Prior old clock. 56 03 16a

1956 11 01

Great St Mary's church has been connected with the University since very early times and was used in the past not only for religious services but for academical proceedings. Under an agreement of 1843 the University and parish met the costs of repair and maintenance, but most of the terms are now out of date. Now they are being urged to meet the sole cost of maintaining the clock and the University organ at the west end, and sharing costs of insurance, heating, repair and cleaning. 56 11 01c

1958 06 23

Work is in process on re-hanging the bells at the parish church of St Nicholas, Great Wilbraham. The peal of five bells, cast in 1709, which have not been rung for over 50 years, have been re-cast and repaired. Completely new fittings and framework have also been necessary, the clock has had to be moved, a belfry tower provided and a ringing gallery installed. The total cost of the work is about £1,300 or which £200 is still required. 58 06 23b

1958 08 01

Mr Wright of Riverside Works, Walnut Tree Avenue has designed a six foot clock to keep the public up-to-date with competitors' times in various events. It runs perfectly and with extreme accuracy. The timing equipment is completely portable and can be carried in the back of a Ford Zephyr estate car, including the collapsible clock face. It was first demonstrated at the Huntingdon Show and has now aroused interest from South Africa. 58 08 01

1958 09 04

Lightning struck the century-old parish church at Reach. The roof was stripped of tiles and there are three gaping holes letting daylight through. Inside the church, masonry and roof timber litter the floor, many of the seats are broken and the stained glass windows blown out. The chapel clock was struck and stopped at 7.34 am, the pendulum was blown away and stuck in one of the rafters. The Vicar has pinned a notice saying 'Any persons entering this church do so at their own risk' All lights in the village went out. 58 09 04

1959 05 27

St Giles church clock – 59 05 27

1960 09 30

Cambridge has 32 thatched properties according to a survey. R.C. Lambeth, the Rural Industries Organiser, wrote to Parish Councils who often sent in the wrong number for their village. Often they overlooked the thatched public house in the centre – it was too obvious for them to see. There are three thatched churches, 26 thatched council houses, a clock house at Houghton and a thatched wall at Orwell. But there are only a handful of thatchers to keep them in repair. 60 09 30a

1961 01 13

Haslingfield church clock renovated – 61 01 13b

1961 02 08

The minute hand of the clock on the front of Cambridge Guildhall disappeared during the night. Police are trying to discover whether it fell off or if it was stolen. The hand was still in place just after 10pm when a Guildhall official set his own watch by it. But early today a passerby noticed it was missing. Detectives who examined the stub left behind on the clock face found evidence of corrosion and believe it might have dropped off. But if it did, who picked it up? 61 02 08

1964 01 07

Ely council is to consider forming a society of volunteers to run No.4 Lynn Road as a museum. The future of the public clock on the former Exchange Cinema is uncertain; nothing has been heard from the London Development Company about the suggestion that the mechanism should be incorporated into the new building to be erected on the Corn Exchange site. Now a similar inquiry will be made of the G.P.O. which is to build a new Post Office on a site facing the Market Place 64 01 07a

1965 04 12

Turret clock at Caxton's Elizabethan Manor House to be removed; given 1887 – 65 04 12a

1967 02 28

King & Harper garage clock tower crashed through roof, killing one man and injuring two others - 67 02 28

1970 04 01

Otto Wehrle jewels shop clock may disappear as shop closes after 125 years – 70 04 01a

1972 03 10

Villagers at Great Gransden voted to put 1p on their rates for a year to raise £174 towards electrifying their church clock, which is one of the oldest working clocks in the country. Some of them gasped when they heard at the annual parish meeting that the total cost of repairing the clock and electrifying the winding mechanism would be £918. But they relaxed a little when they were told that there was a good chance that most of the money would be found by the Pilgrim Trust. The clock, which was made around 1680, has an extremely rare mechanism and its chimes play six different tunes. The clock was last repaired in 1931. Someone has had to climb the spiral staircase every day for 282 years to wind the clock. 56-year-old Mr Sonny Sherman does it at the moment, but the parochial church council doubt if they will be able to find anybody to take over the job if Mr Sherman has to give it up

1972 09 22

The church clock has stood for far too long at ten to three, and Grantchester has deteriorated with time. Its inhabitants seem to be living still on past glories and cannot see that their world-renowned village is but a shadow of what it was. Or to put it in the words of Mr Reginald Lambeth and Mr Vernon Cross "The whole village can only be described as scruffy". Messrs Lambeth and Cross came to their conclusion one summer day in June. They had been charged with the task, unpaid, of picking out Cambridgeshire's best kept village. Swaffham Prior won the contest and Mr Lambeth and Mr Cross eliminated Grantchester in the second round. They were "shocked by the low standards of "property maintenance" although they mentioned notable exceptions such as the White Cottage. The decrepit state of things, they say, cannot be blamed on the roadman, who has to look after three villages, nor on the traffic. Bitterly they conclude; "People who are proud of their association of Rupert Brooke should at least keep to his standards"

1974 01 22

Villagers at Elsworth who look to the church clock to get the right time may be unlucky in a few days. For the church authorities are unable to get at the winding mechanism of the clock since thieves stole the key to the tower of the church. Mr Kenneth Hollier said "We can't get into the tower to have the clock wound, so it will start to run down within a few days". The thieves also took the key to the west door of the church.

1985 03 08

Grantchester church clock stopped - 85 03 08

1985 10 21

The old Otto Wehrle public clock is to be returned to its former position after a decade's absence. The 102-year-old clock was removed from the Cambridge Market Square façade when the Wehrle jewellers business closed after 125 years. Now it has been discovered in Lincolnshire by a Saffron Walden dealer in ancient artefacts, Stephen McDermott. It is being restored by Rodney Firmin of Magdalene Street before being unveiled once more next spring 85 10 21

1986 08 29

Lode's church clock was made by Dents of London, who also made Big Ben. Since it was erected in 1856 it has been kept in pristine condition by a handful of men: William Ayres looked after it until 1945 when he handed responsibility to his son Jack. Then eight years ago when he began to feel his age he trained up Peter Swannell to do the job. He has continued a tradition of recording local and national events inside the door of the clock. 86 08 29

1986 10 07

The church clock at Wistow near Ramsey worked continuously for 151 years until 1899 when a gear wheel was replaced. It is a very early example of its type and was designed to be driven by clockwork. Nine years ago it was electrified as part of the village's Silver Jubilee celebrations but this put extra strain on the old parts and it stopped completely. The Parish Council could not help pay for £2,200 for repairs but an electronics expert and a mechanical designer from Eynesbury have worked on it free of charge. The electrical power source has gone and the mechanism is now back to clockwork.

Volunteers helped to heave the clock, weights and pendulum back into the belfry 86 10 07

1987 02 11

The army has been called in to carry out a rescue operation for villagers in Hempstead. Rust had jammed the hands of the church clock at half past six, even though the 25-year-old mechanism was in perfect working order and still ticking away. Men from the First Queens Dragoon Guards, based at Carver Barracks, Wimbish who normally specialise in sabotage, abseiled down the church tower to remove and later replace the clock hands. Now villagers can synchronise their watches for the first time in years 87 02 11

1989 04 04

The clock at West Wickham church has been removed for an overhaul. It has an unusual lozenge-shaped clock face and is at least 200 years old. It was installed in September 1954 after being brought from St Peter's church, Duxford, where it had been since 1791. Now the clock, originally made by John Warner of Fleet Street, will be overhauled by Peter Watt of Balsham and provided with electrical winding. 89 04 04

1989 02 22

King's College clock restored after 70 years – 89 09 22a

1989 10 04

West Wickham church turned to Cambridge Climbing and Caving Club when it needed the help restoring its historic clock. Steve Kirk abseiled down the tower to replace the hands on the timepiece. The clock originally belonged to St Peter's church in Duxford where it was installed in 1791. It was bought for the village in 1954 by Miss Dulce Taylor of Manor Farm. Now it will have electric wiring thanks to a bequest from her sister. 89 10 04